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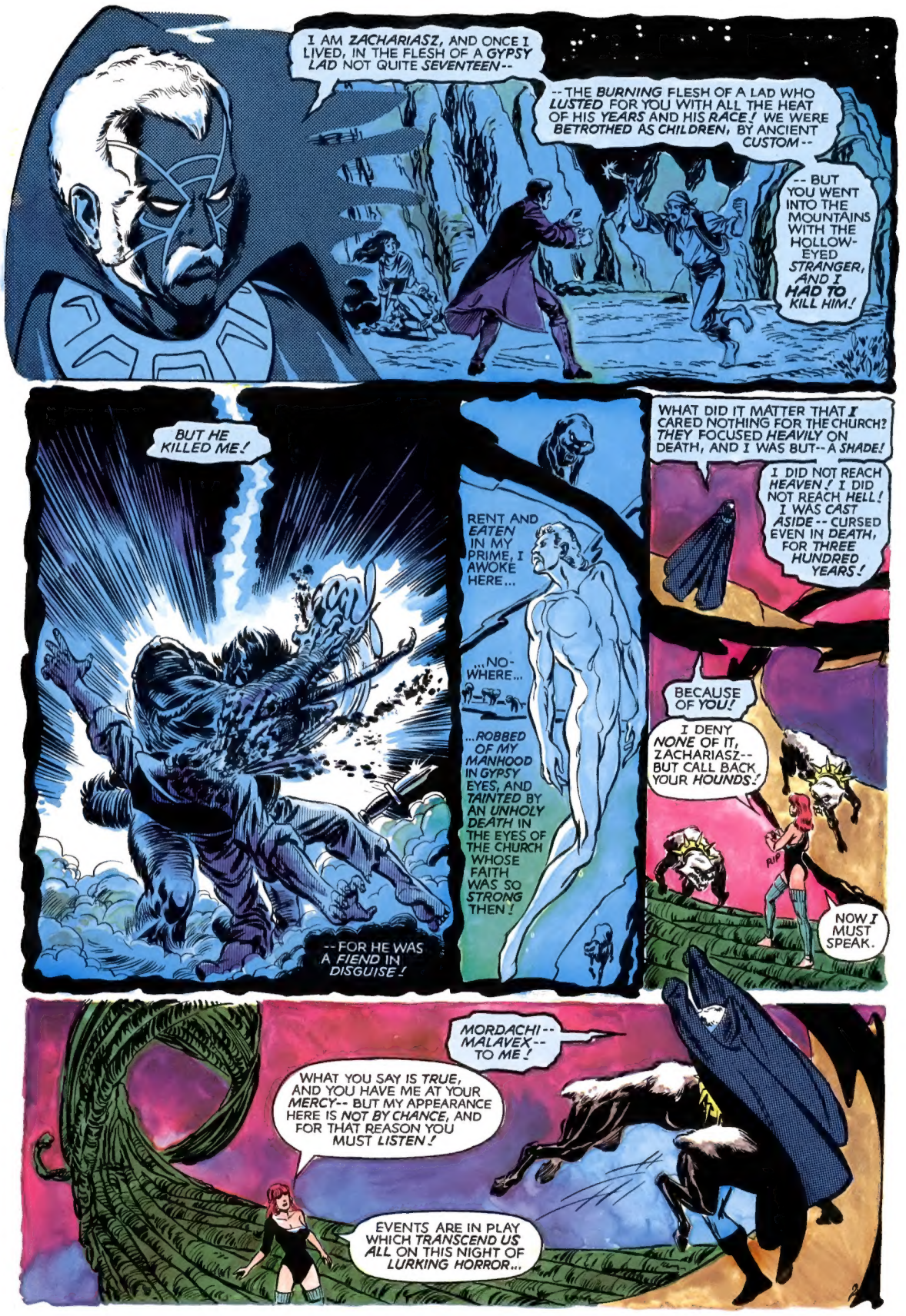
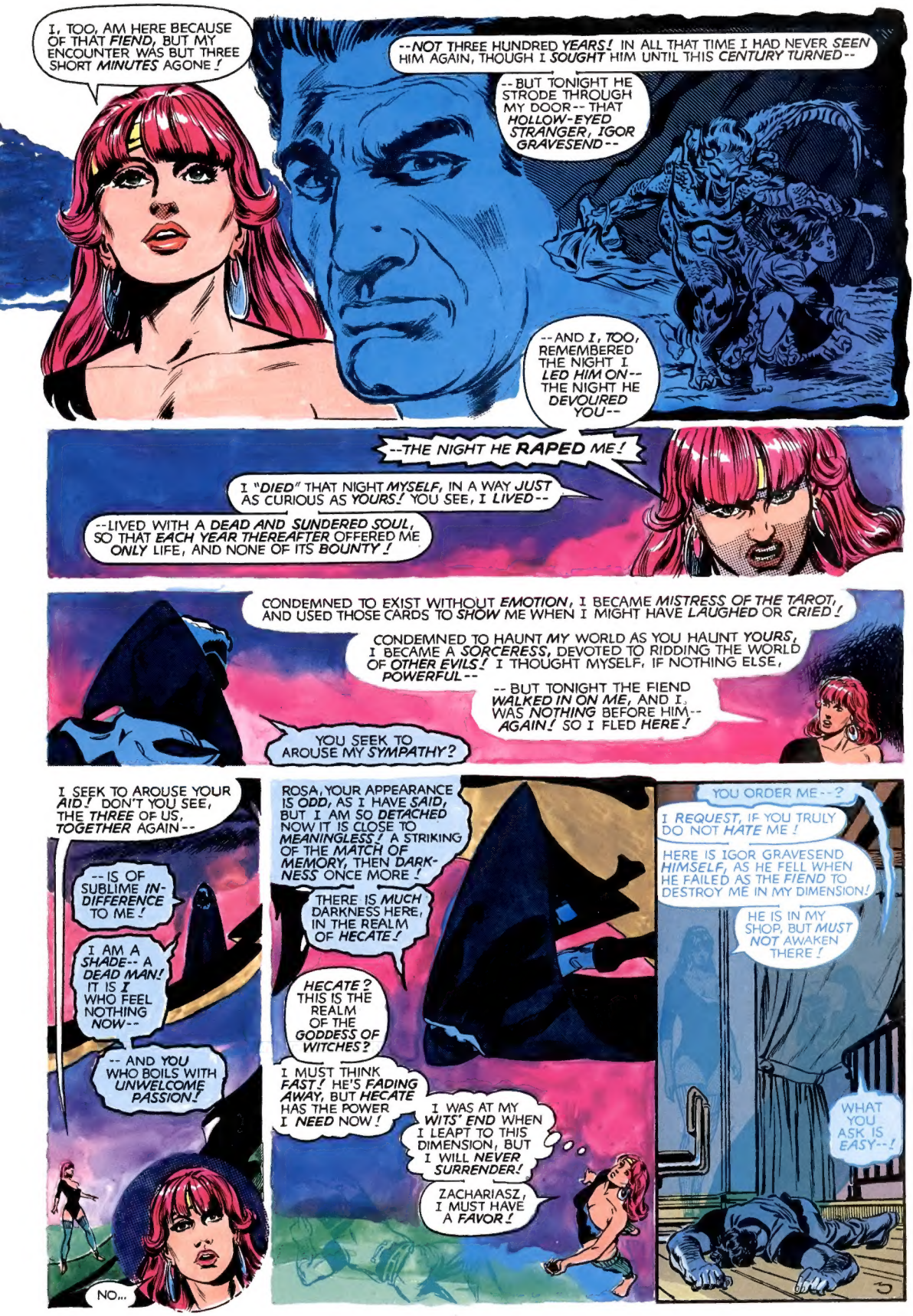
WELCOME MY FRIENDS! WELCOME TO
Scorpio Rose
By ENGLEHART and ROGERS
THERE ARE PLACES WITHIN PLACES -- WITHIN PLACES, DARLING ROSA!
YOU HAVE LEFT YOUR WORLD TO ENTER MINE, NOT KNOWING IT WAS INHABITED --
--MUCH LESS THAT ITS INHABITANT WAS YOUR OWN DEAD ZACHARIASZ!
SHE SAYS--
YOU LIE, SHADE! ZACHARIASZ IS DEAD THESE THREE HUNDRED YEARS!
BUT IS THAT HOPE IN HER EYES?
YOU PICK AN ODD PLACE TO ACCUSE ME OF LYING, GIRL!
THIS TIME, I AM THE MASTER!
AS ARE
TOM PALMER
INKER
&
TOM ORZECHOWSKI
LETTERER
&
JOE D'ESPOSITO
COLORIST
THIS WAY TO THE FLASHBACK


I AM ZACHARIASZ, AND ONCE I LIVED, IN THE FLESH OF A GYPSY LAD NOT QUITE SEVENTEEN--
--THE BURNING FLESH OF A LAD WHO LUSTED FOR YOU WITH ALL THE HEAT OF HIS YEARS AND HIS RACE! WE WERE BETROTHED AS CHILDREN, BY ANCIENT CUSTOM--
-- BUT YOU WENT INTO THE MOUNTAINS WITH THE HOLLOW-EYED STRANGER, AND I HAD TO KILL HIM!
BUT HE KILLED ME!
--FOR HE WAS A FIEND IN DISGUISE!
RENT AND EATEN IN MY PRIME, I AWOKE HERE...
...NO-WHERE...
...ROBBED OF MY MANHOOD IN GYPSY EYES, AND TAINTED BY AN UNHOLY DEATH IN THE EYES OF THE CHURCH WHOSE FAITH WAS SO STRONG THEN!
WHAT DID IT MATTER THAT I CARED NOTHING FOR THE CHURCH? THEY FOCUSED HEAVILY ON DEATH, AND I WAS BUT--A SHADE!
I DID NOT REACH HEAVEN! I DID NOT REACH HELL! I WAS CAST ASIDE -- CURSED EVEN IN DEATH, FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS!
BECAUSE OF YOU!
I DENY NONE OF IT, ZACHARIASZ-- BUT CALL BACK YOUR HOUNDS!
RIP
NOW I MUST SPEAK.
MORDACHI-- MALAVEX-- TO ME!
WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE, AND YOU HAVE ME AT YOUR MERCY-- BUT MY APPEARANCE HERE IS NOT BY CHANCE, AND FOR THAT REASON YOU MUST LISTEN!
EVENTS ARE IN PLAY WHICH TRANSCEND US ALL ON THIS NIGHT OF LURKING HORROR...


I, TOO, AM HERE BECAUSE OF THAT FIEND, BUT MY ENCOUNTER WAS BUT THREE SHORT MINUTES AGONE!
--NOT THREE HUNDRED YEARS! IN ALL THAT TIME I HAD NEVER SEEN HIM AGAIN, THOUGH I SOUGHT HIM UNTIL THIS CENTURY TURNED--
--BUT TONIGHT HE STRODE THROUGH MY DOOR-- THAT HOLLOW-EYED STRANGER, IGOR GRAVESEND--
--AND I, TOO, REMEMBERED THE NIGHT I LED HIM ON-- THE NIGHT HE DEVOURED YOU--
--THE NIGHT HE RAPED ME!
I "DIED" THAT NIGHT MYSELF, IN A WAY JUST AS CURIOUS AS YOURS! YOU SEE, I LIVED--
--LIVED WITH A DEAD AND SUNDERED SOUL, SO THAT EACH YEAR THEREAFTER OFFERED ME ONLY LIFE, AND NONE OF ITS BOUNTY!
CONDEMNED TO EXIST WITHOUT EMOTION, I BECAME MISTRESS OF THE TAROT, AND USED THOSE CARDS TO SHOW ME WHEN I MIGHT HAVE LAUGHED OR CRIED!
CONDEMNED TO HAUNT MY WORLD AS YOU HAUNT YOURS, I BECAME A SORCERESS, DEVOTED TO RIDDING THE WORLD OF OTHER EVILS! I THOUGHT MYSELF, IF NOTHING ELSE, POWERFUL--
-- BUT TONIGHT THE FIEND WALKED IN ON ME, AND I, WAS NOTHING BEFORE HIM-- AGAIN! SO I FLED HERE!
YOU SEEK TO AROUSE MY SYMPATHY?
I SEEK TO AROUSE YOUR AID! DON'T YOU SEE, THE THREE OF US, TOGETHER AGAIN--
-- IS OF SUBLIME IN-DIFFERENCE TO ME!
I AM A SHADE-- A DEAD MAN! IT IS I WHO FEEL NOTHING NOW--
-- AND YOU WHO BOILS WITH UNWELCOME PASSION!
NO...
ROSA, YOUR APPEARANCE IS ODD, AS I HAVE SAID, BUT I AM SO DETACHED NOW IT IS CLOSE TO MEANINGLESS! A STRIKING OF THE MATCH OF MEMORY, THEN DARK-NESS ONCE MORE!
THERE IS MUCH DARKNESS HERE, IN THE REALM OF HECATE!
HECATE? THIS IS THE REALM OF THE GODDESS OF WITCHES?
I MUST THINK FAST! HE'S FADING AWAY, BUT HECATE HAS THE POWER I NEED NOW!
I WAS AT MY WITS' END WHEN I LEAPT TO THIS DIMENSION, BUT I WILL NEVER SURRENDER!
ZACHARIASZ, I MUST HAVE A FAVOR!
YOU ORDER ME--?
I REQUEST, IF YOU TRULY DO NOT HATE ME!
HERE IS IGOR GRAVESEND HIMSELF, AS HE FELL WHEN HE FAILED AS THE FIEND TO DESTROY ME IN MY DIMENSION!
HE IS IN MY SHOP, BUT MUST NOT AWAKEN THERE!
WHAT YOU ASK IS EASY--!

YEOW
THE FIEND IS STILL WITHIN HIM! HOT!!
PERSEVERE, ZACHARIASZ!
"PERSEVERE!" EVEN NOW, SHE PLAYS THE GREAT LADY!
IF I WERE NOT A DEAD MAN, I WOULD PROBABLY FIND HER ANGERING-- AS ANGERING AS SHE EVER WAS!
BUT OF COURSE-- I AM DEAD!
AND SO, THIS MORTAL BODY IS DIFFICULT TO MOVE! ONCE THROUGH HER DOOR I SHALL DEPART--
-- THIS STRANGE--
uh oh!
LOOKS LIKE THERE'S SOMEBODY BEHIND THAT OPEN DOOR AFTER ALL, MAN!
NOT FOR LONG, COCHONETTE!
MUST MOVE QUICK--
HEY! HE'S A PUSHOVER, MAN!
SLOK
--BUT THIS BODY--!
UGGH
YOU SPEAK TOO SOON, COCHONETTE!
BRUP
STEP ON 'IM GOOD, JEAN-PAUL!
SWUMP

UNNCH!≈ I HAVEN'T FELT PAIN FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS!
IT HURTS-- ME!
WOK
BUT I WILL PERSEVERE!

A MAN WHO LEAVES HIS DOOR AJAR--
HEY-- COCHONETTE--
SNKKK

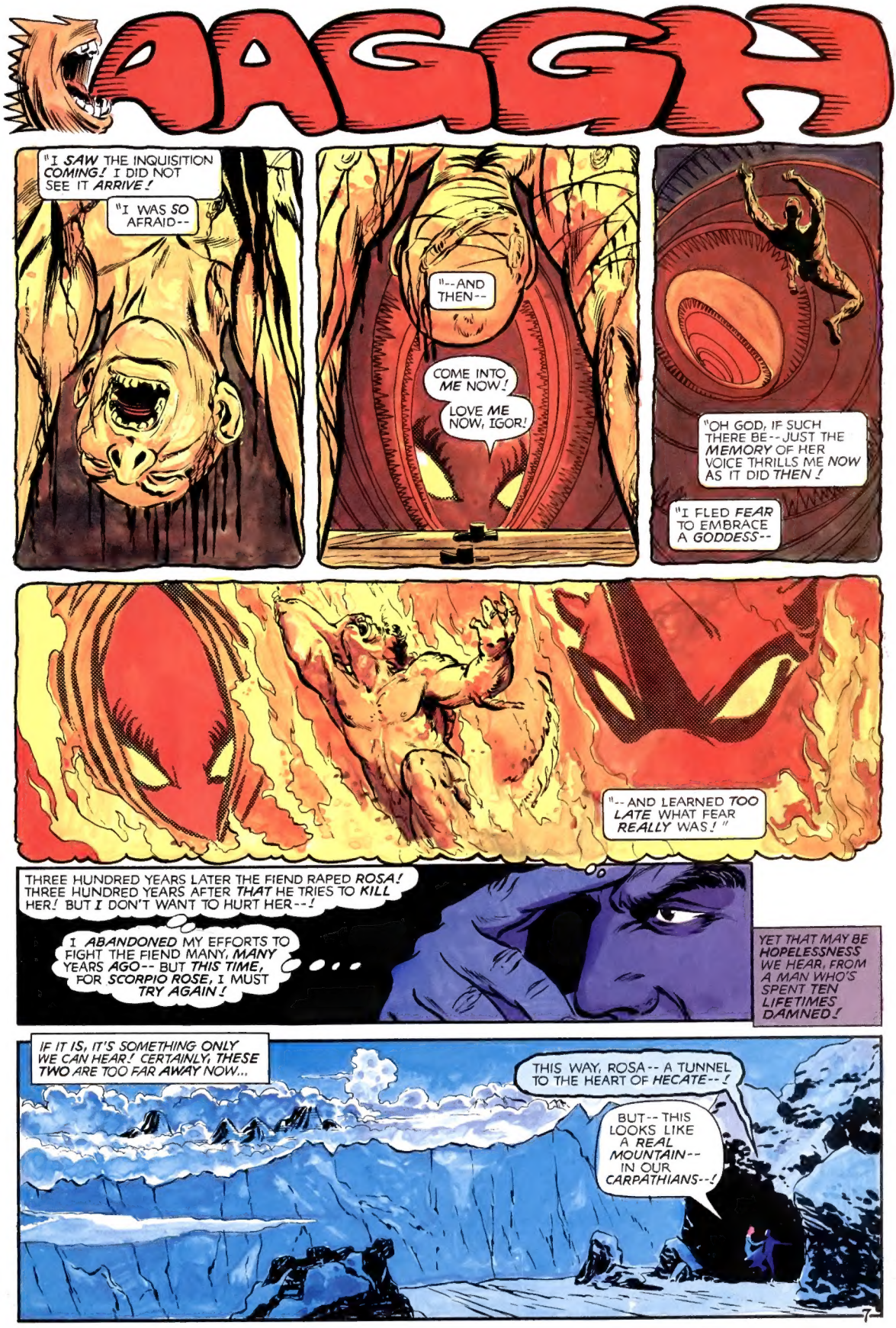
QUOI?

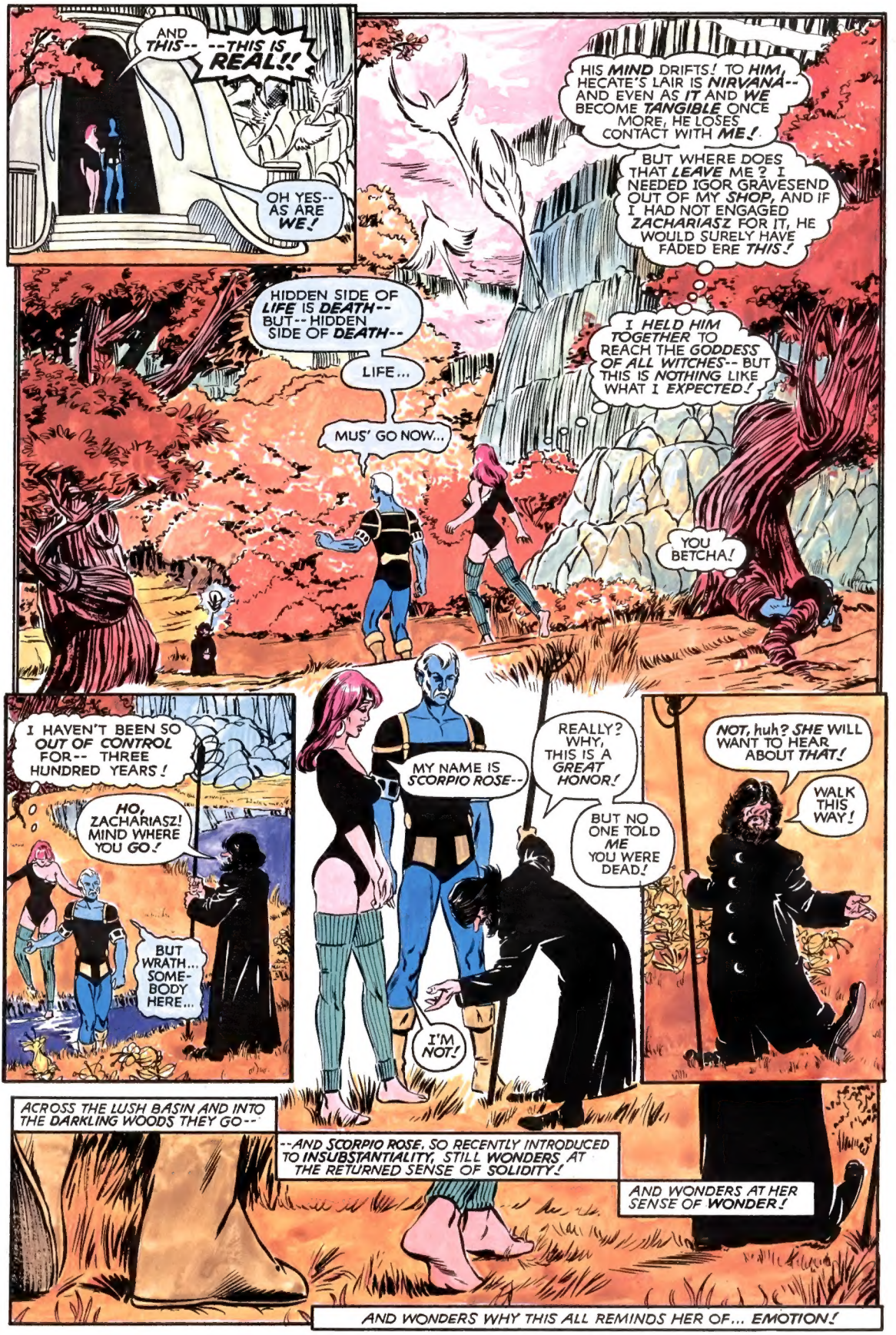
WHACK

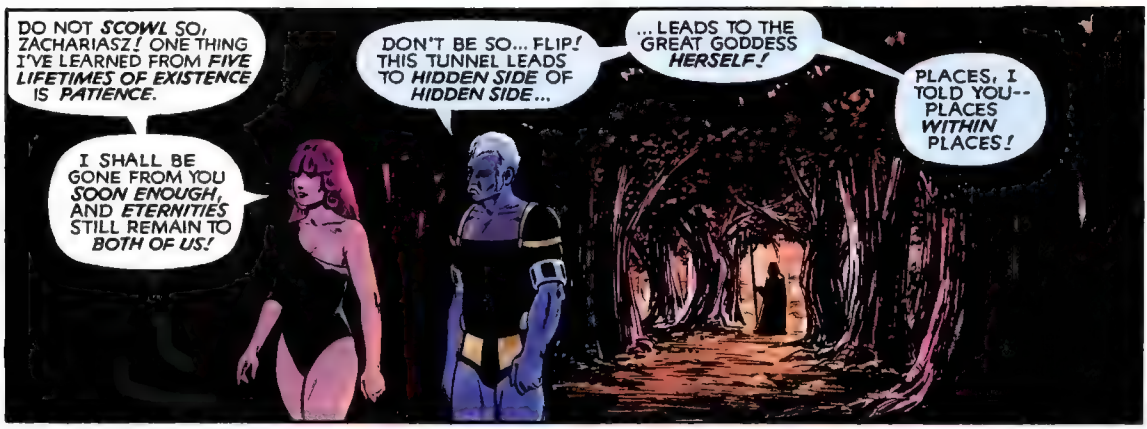
THE FRENCHMEN ARE AS MULISH AS EVER, I SEE! A GYPSY COULD ALWAYS OUTFOX THEM!
SO LITTLE HAS CHANGED IN LIFE! ONLY THE CLOTHING--!
BUT I'LL JUST SECURE ROSA'S DOOR--

-- AND REMEMBER WHAT SILLY HALLUCINATIONS DANCE THROUGH YOUR HEAD WHEN YOU THINK YOU'RE ALIVE!
ONCE I PUT GRAVESEND WHERE NO OTHER FOOTPAD WILL FIND HIM, I SHALL BE GREAT HECATE'S SHADE AGAIN!

AND NOW--
Krash
VERY WELL DONE, ZACHARIASZ!
PERHAPS! BUT I AM GOING BACK TO HECATE NOW!
THAT'S JUST WHAT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT...
FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER--
HE'S COMING AROUND, LeVEC!
UNNNHHN
TAKE IT EASY, M'SIEU GRAVESEND! YOU HAD A DAMAGING FIGHT, BUT YOU WON!
I DID? I--
HERE...
YES! YES, OF COURSE! I FOUGHT--FOUR OF THEM!
HOW DO I KNOW HOW MANY THERE WERE? WHEN THE FIEND TAKES CONTROL OF ME, I REMEMBER NOTHING!
FOR SIX HUNDRED YEARS I'VE AWAKENED IN ALLEYS--
--IN FIELDS, IN HOUSES--THREE TIMES IN BOATS AND ONE IN AN AIRPLANE! FOR SIX HUNDRED YEARS I'VE AWAKENED, TO CLEAN THE SHIT LEFT BY MY CURSE!
"I HAD SEEN THEM COMING-- THE ZEALOTS! SMILING AT FIRST-- GROWING STRONGER-- BUT I WAS NEVER REALLY AFRAID UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE!
"IF ONLY I HADN'T BEEN SO AFRAID ON THAT ONE NIGHT--!


AAGH
"I SAW THE INQUISITION COMING! I DID NOT SEE IT ARRIVE!
"I WAS SO AFRAID--
"--AND THEN--
COME INTO ME NOW!
LOVE ME NOW, IGOR!
"OH GOD, IF SUCH THERE BE--JUST THE MEMORY OF HER VOICE THRILLS ME NOW AS IT DID THEN!
"I FLED FEAR TO EMBRACE A GODDESS--
"--AND LEARNED TOO LATE WHAT FEAR REALLY WAS!"
THREE HUNDRED YEARS LATER THE FIEND RAPED ROSA! THREE HUNDRED YEARS AFTER THAT HE TRIES TO KILL HER! BUT I DON'T WANT TO HURT HER--!
I ABANDONED MY EFFORTS TO FIGHT THE FIEND MANY, MANY YEARS AGO-- BUT THIS TIME, FOR SCORPIO ROSE, I MUST TRY AGAIN!
YET THAT MAY BE HOPELESSNESS WE HEAR, FROM A MAN WHO'S SPENT TEN LIFETIMES DAMNED!
IF IT IS, IT'S SOMETHING ONLY WE CAN HEAR! CERTAINLY, THESE TWO ARE TOO FAR AWAY NOW...
THIS WAY, ROSA-- A TUNNEL TO THE HEART OF HECATE--!
BUT-- THIS LOOKS LIKE A REAL MOUNTAIN-- IN OUR CARPATHIANS--!

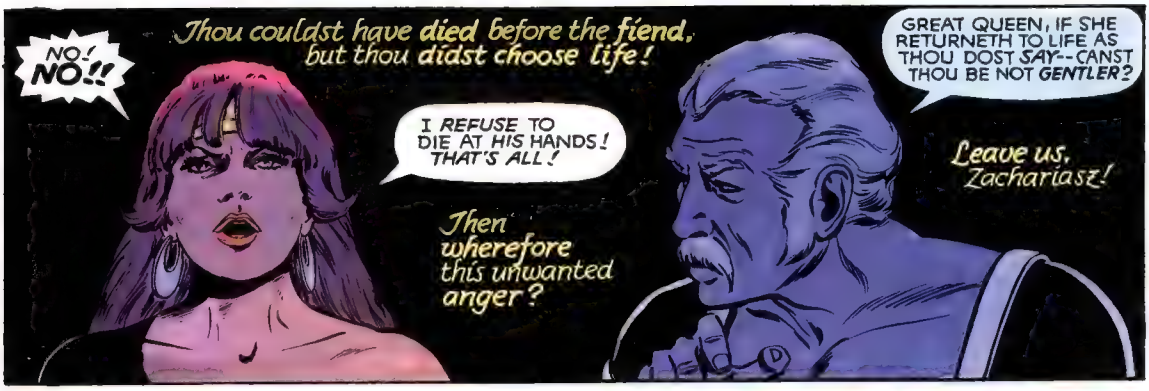

AND THIS--
--THIS IS REAL!!
OH YES-- AS ARE WE!
HIS MIND DRIFTS! TO HIM, HECATE'S LAIR IS NIRVANA-- AND EVEN AS IT AND WE BECOME TANGIBLE ONCE MORE, HE LOSES CONTACT WITH ME!
BUT WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE ME? I NEEDED IGOR GRAVESEND OUT OF MY SHOP, AND IF I HAD NOT ENGAGED ZACHARIASZ FOR IT, HE WOULD SURELY HAVE FADED ERE THIS!
I HELD HIM TOGETHER TO REACH THE GODDESS OF ALL WITCHES-- BUT THIS IS NOTHING LIKE WHAT I EXPECTED!
HIDDEN SIDE OF LIFE IS DEATH-- BUT-- HIDDEN SIDE OF DEATH--
LIFE...
MUS' GO NOW...
YOU BETCHA!
I HAVEN'T BEEN SO OUT OF CONTROL FOR-- THREE HUNDRED YEARS!
HO, ZACHARIASZ! MIND WHERE YOU GO!
BUT WRATH... SOME-BODY HERE...
MY NAME IS SCORPIO ROSE--
I'M NOT!
REALLY? WHY, THIS IS A GREAT HONOR!
BUT NO ONE TOLD ME YOU WERE DEAD!
NOT, huh? SHE WILL WANT TO HEAR ABOUT THAT!
WALK THIS WAY!
ACROSS THE LUSH BASIN AND INTO THE DARKLING WOODS THEY GO--
--AND SCORPIO ROSE, SO RECENTLY INTRODUCED TO INSUBSTANTIALITY, STILL WONDERS AT THE RETURNED SENSE OF SOLIDITY!
AND WONDERS AT HER SENSE OF WONDER!
AND WONDERS WHY THIS ALL REMINDS HER OF... EMOTION!


DO NOT SCOWL SO, ZACHARIASZ! ONE THING I'VE LEARNED FROM FIVE LIFETIMES OF EXISTENCE IS PATIENCE.
I SHALL BE GONE FROM YOU SOON ENOUGH, AND ETERNITIES STILL REMAIN TO BOTH OF US!
DON'T BE SO... FLIP! THIS TUNNEL LEADS TO HIDDEN SIDE OF HIDDEN SIDE...
... LEADS TO THE GREAT GODDESS HERSELF!
PLACES, I TOLD YOU-- PLACES WITHIN PLACES!

And the place of Hecate is the Dark Beyond! Yet before me flameth the light of life!
Hear me, Scorpio Rose-- I shall not aid thee!

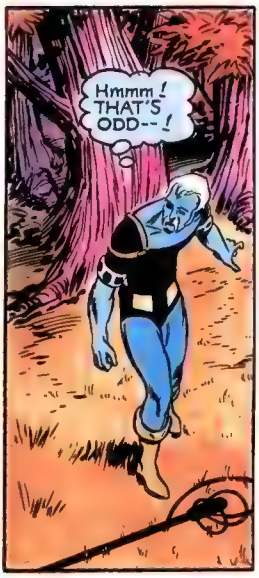
THOU HAST BEEN MY AID MANY TIMES, INVINCIBLE QUEEN! GODDESS AND PRIESTESS HAVE WE BEEN--!
Aye! Goddess and priestess! Any witch may call upon me, and I shall advance our magics!
But thou comest to me now not as witch, but as woman!
IS THERE A DIFFERENCE, GREAT QUEEN?

Fool! Women waste their power on life, while witches put it to use!
Without a soul, Scorpio Rose made the perfect witch--!
--but now her soul returneth!


NO! NO!!
Thou couldst have died before the fiend, but thou didst choose life!
I REFUSE TO DIE AT HIS HANDS! THAT'S ALL!
Then wherefore this unwanted anger?
GREAT QUEEN, IF SHE RETURNETH TO LIFE AS THOU DOST SAY--CANST THOU BE NOT GENTLER?
Leave us, Zachariasz!

THE DEAD MAN HESITATES--A MOMENT FOR OTHERS, AN AGE FOR HIMSELF--
--THEN TURNS AND OBEYS!
WHAT CHOICE HAVE I? I AM BUT A SHADE, SHE THE GODDESS OF SHADOWS!
BUT--ROSA--!
WHAT IS ROSA?

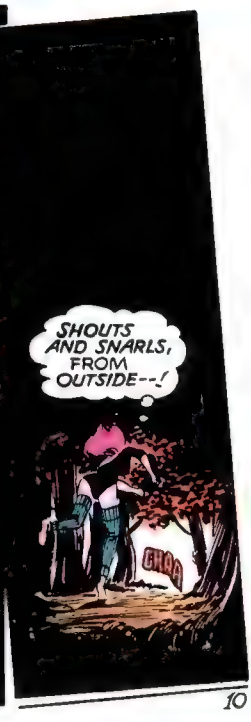
I HATED HER WHENEVER I THOUGHT OF HER--WHICH WAS SELDOM! ANY THOUGHT COMES SELDOM TO A DEAD MAN!
I WAS GLAD TO REACH THE VALLEY AND FORGET HER AGAIN! BUT NOW, RECALLED TO HER SO SOON, I --


Hmmm! THAT'S ODD--!

WHERE'S WRATH?

GREAT GODDESS, IT MAY BE THAT I AM CHANGING--I CANNOT TELL! BUT THE FIEND--AND THOSE WHOM HE DOTH SERVE--SEEK THE BOOK OF FLESHE!
IF I CANNOT PROTECT IT, A CHILD OF EVIL MAY BE BORN UPON THE EARTH!
I am the dark of the moon? I am she who loveth tomb, not womb--

--but a child born of the book is not alive! It weareth but the form of life! So it remaineth thou alone who livest, Scorpion--
--and Hecate will not aid thee!
AND SO THE DARKNESS IS DARKNESS ONCE MORE--IN THE TUNNEL--IN THE MIND OF SCORPIO ROSE!
AM I BEATEN, AT LAST? NO HELP--NO HOPE--AND CHANGED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THREE CENTURIES!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S NEXT! I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START--!
RRR SNAP!
WHAT--?


SHOUTS AND SNARLS, FROM OUTSIDE--!
CHOP

GREAT HEC---
NOT THE FIEND! NOT NOW!
ROSA! RUN FOR THE OTHER TUNNEL! HE'LL KILL YOU IN THIS VALLEY!
BUT-- WHAT ABOUT YOU--?
ME? I'VE WAITED THREE CENTURIES TO MEET MY MURDERER AGAIN!
SAVE YOURSELF! THIS TIME AT LEAST, MY FATE IS IN MY OWN HANDS!
OH ZACHARIASZ! IF HATING TO LEAVE YOU MAKES ME A WOMAN, THEN WOMAN I AM--
--BUT IF HONORING MY VOW TO PROTECT THE BOOK MAKES ME A WITCH, THEN WITCH I AM AS WELL!
RRRRRRRR! IT'S NOT YOU I WANT, DEAD MAN!
IT'S HER!

HA HA HA HA HA
IGOR GRAVESEND WANTS TO HELP YOU, ROSA! BUT IGOR GRAVESEND IS GONE NOW!
MY MASTERS HAVE BROUGHT ME BACK, DESPITE ALL HIS HOPES AND PLEADINGS!
YOU ARE MINE NOW!
HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HUH?

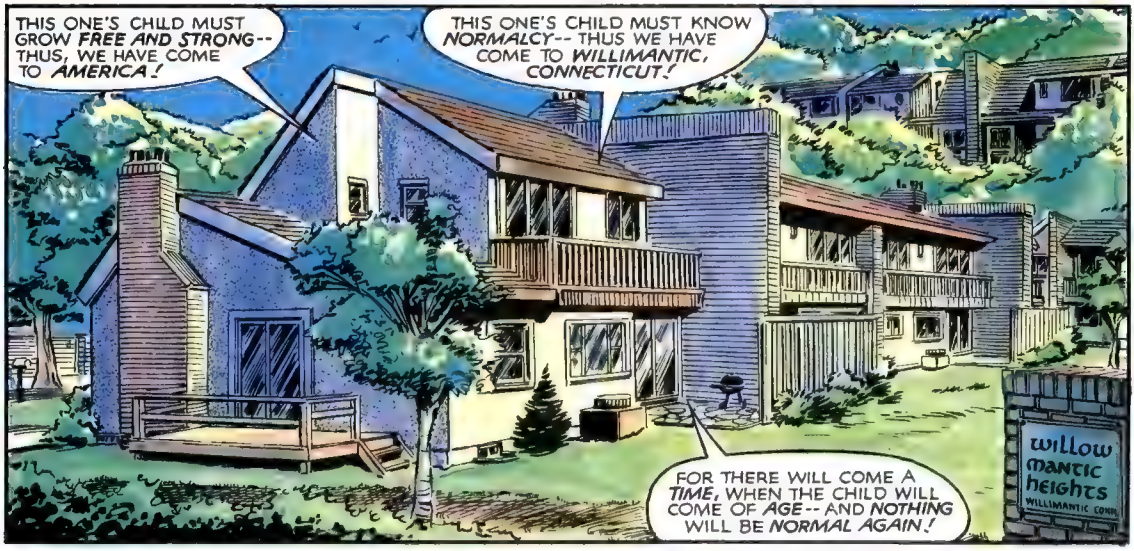
VILE SCHEMING WOMAN! NO ONE BEFORE HAS SLIPPED THE FIEND, THE MANDRAGORE!
PERHAPS SOME DAY YOU WILL KNOW HOW MUCH I WISH I COULD CONFRONT YOU, CREATURE!
VERY GOOD-- ROSA! BUT-- SO WEARY NOW--
--AND I FEEL MY MIND GOING AGAIN!
CAN I-- DO THE SAME AS YOU?
RRRARRR
RRGHH
HE COMES HIGH-- SO I--
--GO LOW!
YES!!

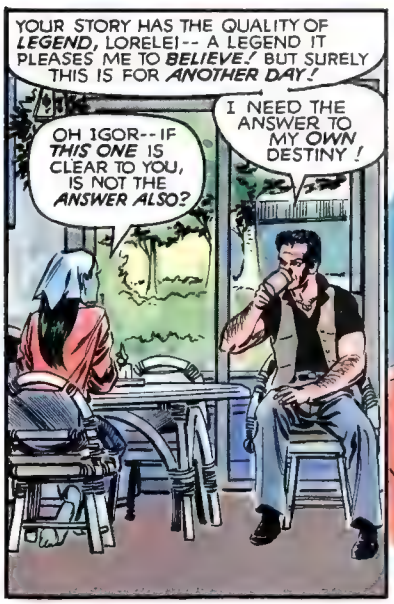
ZACHARIASZ! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
THUFF!
I'M SAFE-- FROM HIM! BUT-- FADING NOW--
NO! NO, YOU MUST STAY WITH ME NOW!
I'M LOST, AND I NEED YOU!
I TREATED YOU AS BADLY AS ANY WOMAN HAS EVER TREATED A MAN-- HER MAN! I WAS PROMISED TO YOU! I DID BREAK OUR VOWS!
IT'S ALL MY FAULT! EVERYTHING-- MY FAULT!
SHHH... SHHH NOW!
WE CANNOT CHANGE THE PAST-- NO, NOT EVEN THE GREATEST OF WITCHES CAN DO THAT! WE ARE WHAT WE ARE!
I AM DEAD-- BUT FOR YOU, I WILL STRIVE TO REMAIN COHERENT!
AND YOU--
Oh-- MY DARLING--!
--YOU ARE SCORPIO ROSE! IT IS YOU WHO MUST PULL US THROUGH!
IF THIS IS WHAT LIFE IS LIKE, GIVE ME MORE!
14

I-- TRIED TO KILL HIM FOR YOU ONCE! THE FIEND-- HE WAS TOO MUCH FOR ME, BUT--
--I LOVED YOU THEN-- AND-- I LOVE YOU NOW!
BOTH OF US HAVE LOST YEARS-- SO MANY, MANY YEARS, DARLING ZACHARIASZ-- BUT OUR TIME HAS COME AGAIN!
DARK AS NOW IT SEEMS, WE SHALL WIN THIS WAR-- I KNOW IT NOW!
WE SHALL BEST THE FIEND AND HIS MASTERS! WE SHALL REGAIN BOTH OUR LIVES--
--AND WE SHALL LOVE LIKE NO TWO EVER BEFORE US!
THAT IS MY PROMISE: THE PROMISE OF SCORPIO ROSE!
TELL YOUR HOUNDS TO RELAX, MY GYPSY MAN! WE'VE RETURNED TO MY HOME--
--AND OUR SALVATION BEGINS NOW!!
DIE! DIE! DIE...
NO, Mr. GRAVESEND! PLEASE--
WHA--? WHERE AM I?
YOU ARE IN A HOSPITAL-- AT THE FOOT OF THE CARPATHIANS!
YOU WERE FOUND WANDERING THROUGH THE SNOWS-- CLOTHED FOR A CITY BUT NOT FOR CLIMBING!
AMAZINGLY, HOWEVER, YOU HAVE SUFFERED NO ILL EFFECTS!
AMAZING? NOT FOR A MAN WHO IS BUT THE MASK OF A FIEND FROM THE PITS OF HELL!
IGOR GRAVESEND WILL NEVER DIE FROM THE COLD!
WELL, WHEN YOU WISH TO TALK...
IGOR GRAVESEND WILL GO ON AND ON-- BRUTALIZING WOMEN HE LOVES!
CLICK
WOMEN HE SWORE HE WOULD SAVE!
ON AND ON... UNLESS...

CLICK
...IGOR GRAVESEND PUTS A STOP TO IT!
EIGHTY YEARS AGO, THE CRIMSON TOWER YIELDED THE DRAGON'S HORN!
AT LAST, I HAD POWER UNIMAGINABLE-- POWER TO SAVE ME, OR POWER TO KILL ME!
BUT I AM SUCH A COWARD, I COULDN'T USE IT UNTIL THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY-- AND SO, I HID IT--
-- WHERE MY MASTERS WOULD NEVER FIND IT--
--BENEATH MY RIBS!
TWICE MY MASTERS HAVE SENT ME TO KILL SCORPIO ROSE! THEY MUST NOT HAVE A THIRD CHANCE!
IGOR GRAVESEND MUST DESTROY THEM-- OR HIMSELF!

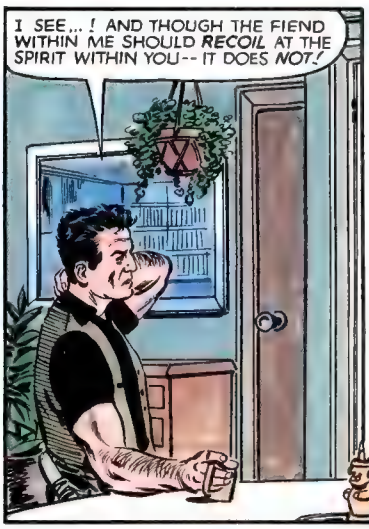
THE STARS ABOVE EUROPE FLASH AND FLAME! SPACE SPINS IN RESPONSE, AND IGOR IS --
--IS...
WH-WHERE--? WHERE AM I?
IN THE KITCHEN, I'M AFRAID! THE PLANT ROOM'S JUST BEEN SPRINKLED!
PLANT--? WHAT--?
YOU'RE NOT MY MISTRESS! WHO ARE YOU?
WELL, YOU BEING WHO YOU ARE... YOU WILL CALL THIS ONE -- LORELEI!
LORELEI--? I-- SOMEHOW, I SEEM TO KNOW YOU-- UNDER ANOTHER NAME!
MANY KNOW THIS ONE, UNDER MANY NAMES! SHE TOUCHES MANY LIVES! BUT SHE IS EVER... THIS ONE!
DO NOT FEAR HER, IGOR-- BENEATH YOUR BLUFF EXTERIOR, SHE FEELS YOUR FEAR, AND WITHERS BEFORE IT! YOU HAVE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE!
SHE WILL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU NEED!
YOU ARE-- LIFE?
YOU SEE, YOU DO KNOW LORELEI! SHE IS NOT SO HARD TO FATHOM!
SHE HAS LIVED IN THIS CONDO FOR SIX YEARS NOW, AT THE HEART OF EARTH'S MAGNETIC FLUX-- A QUIET, CHEERFUL WIDOW--
--AND HER SON!
MO
NO ONE HERE KNOWS THAT HER MAN WAS AN ALIEN-- THAT HE WAS, IN FACT, A PERFECT INTELLIGENCE FROM BEYOND THE STARS--
--WHO CHOSE HER FROM ALL EARTHWOMEN TO BE HIS BRIDE, AND TOOK HUMAN FORM TO MAKE IT SO!
ALL THE NEIGHBORS KNOW IS THAT THE UNION BORE FRUIT!


THIS ONE'S CHILD MUST GROW FREE AND STRONG-- THUS, WE HAVE COME TO AMERICA!
THIS ONE'S CHILD MUST KNOW NORMALCY-- THUS WE HAVE COME TO WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT!
FOR THERE WILL COME A TIME, WHEN THE CHILD WILL COME OF AGE-- AND NOTHING WILL BE NORMAL AGAIN!
willow mantic heights
WILLIMANTIC CONN.


YOUR STORY HAS THE QUALITY OF LEGEND, LORELEI-- A LEGEND IT PLEASES ME TO BELIEVE! BUT SURELY THIS IS FOR ANOTHER DAY!
I NEED THE ANSWER TO MY OWN DESTINY!
OH IGOR-- IF THIS ONE IS CLEAR TO YOU, IS NOT THE ANSWER ALSO?

THIS ONE-- THESE TWO-- ARE JUST WHAT YOU SAID: THE PROMISES OF LIFE! AND YOUR MASTERS ARE THE PROMISE OF DEATH!
OM
ALL THOSE WHO FAIL TO LIVE OPPOSE THIS ONE! FROM TIME LORDS TO MACHINES TO, YES, YOUR MASTERS, THEY ALL ABHOR HER LOVE!

THAT IS WHY YOUR MASTERS SEEK TO PRODUCE THEIR OWN DISTORTED CHILD, THROUGH SCORPIO ROSE'S BOOK OF FLESHE!
THEY WANT A COUNTERPART TO THIS ONE'S CHILD-- AN ADVERSARY! BUT THEIR TIME GROWS SHORT!
SOON, LORELEI'S CHILD WILL BE TOO FAR ADVANCED FOR ANY CREATURE OF THEIRS TO OVERTAKE!

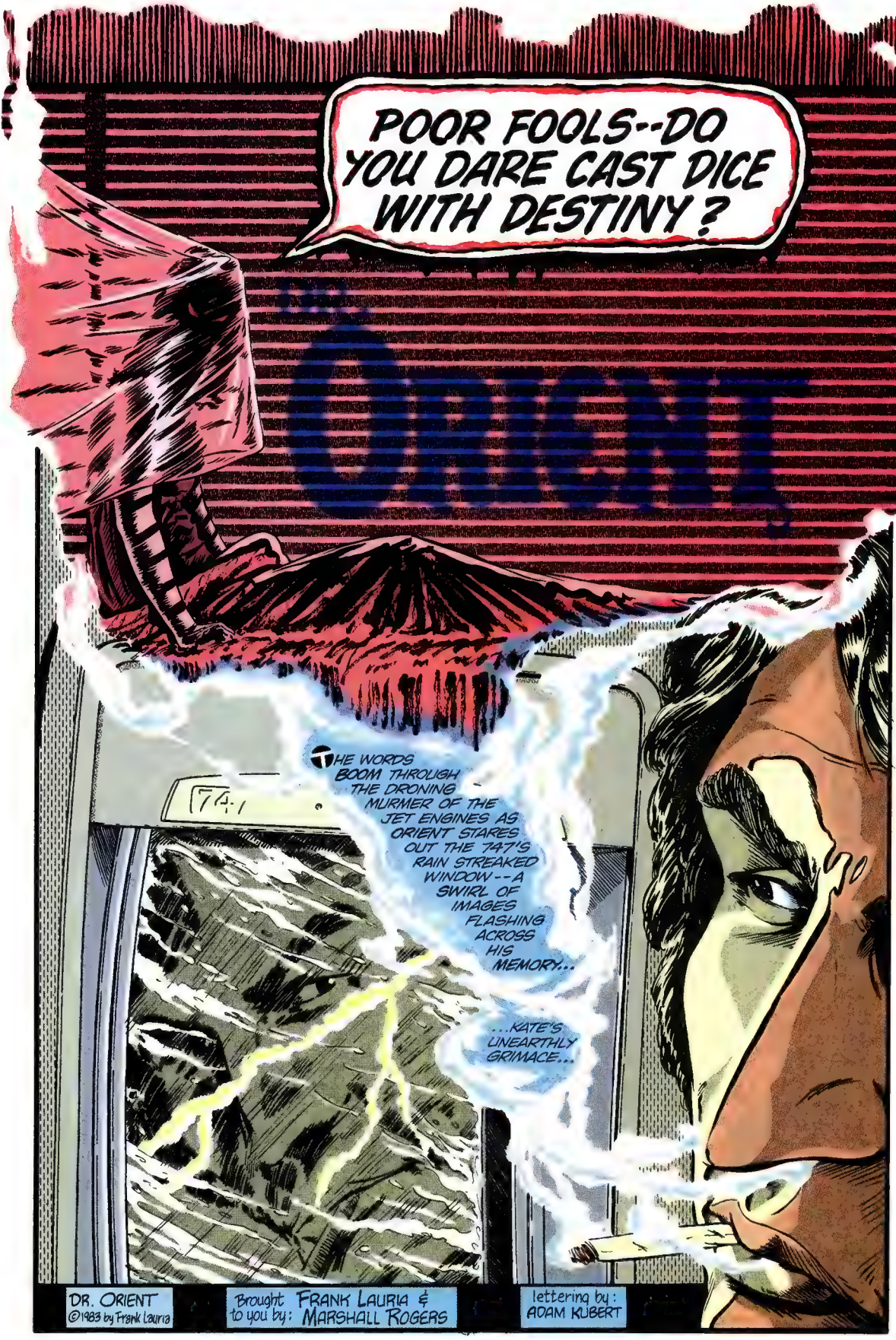

I SEE... ! AND THOUGH THE FIEND WITHIN ME SHOULD RECOIL AT THE SPIRIT WITHIN YOU-- IT DOES NOT!

OM

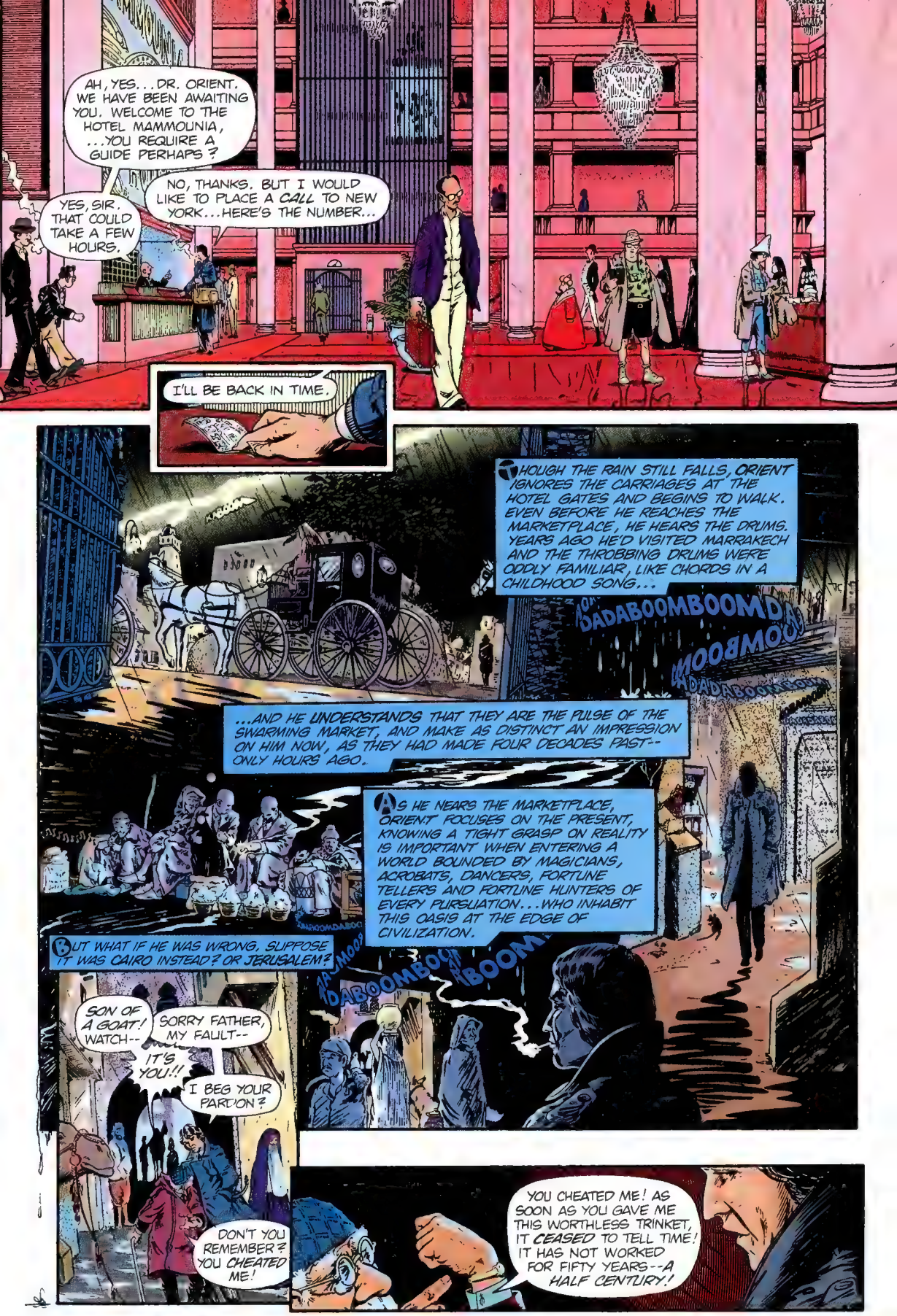
AND SO, THE DRAGON'S HORN HAS BROUGHT YOU WHAT YOU NEED!
YOU NOW KNOW WHY YOU MUST SAVE SCORPIO ROSE!

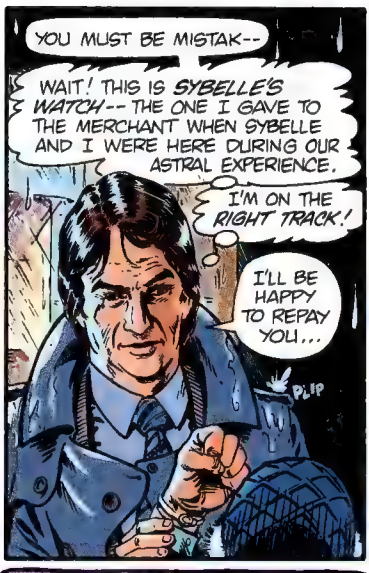
IN THAT, LORELEI, YOU ARE MISTAKEN!
I AM NOT REVOLTED BY YOUR SPIRIT, BUT NEITHER AM I MOVED! I SHALL SAVE ROSA FOR ONE REASON ALONE!
MAY WHAT GOD THERE BE PRESERVE ME--
--I LOVE HER!
THIS ONE KNEW A MAN ONCE, WHO LOVED HER LIKE THAT! BUT SHE DID NOT RETURN HIS LOVE--
IT DOESN'T MATTER, LORELEI! YOU SEE, I'M FIGHTING FOR HER, NOT ME!
HERE IN MY HOME THERE ARE THREE HUNDRED YEARS OF MY MAGICKS, DARLING ZACHARIASZ!
AH, MAN--'TIS A LONELY ROAD YOU WALK!
GO, THEN! THIS IS NO JAIL, eh? AVENGE HER!
BUT CARRY MY BLESSINGS--"FIEND"!
IT DOES NOT MATTER, BELOVED! YOU MISUNDERSTAND ME!
FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS, I KNEW NO EMOTIONS! I COULD NOT FEEL, SO I USED THE TAROT TO TELL
FOR THE FIRST TIME, I KNOW WHAT CARD I SHALL CAUSE TO OVERTURN--
Princess of Cups
THE PRINCESS OF CUPS!
ROMANCE!
I AM NOT BEREFT OF HECATE'S FAVOR--I AM FREE OF IT!
ALL I RETAIN FROM MY PAST IS MY PERSONAL POWER!
SO LET US FOLLOW THE ROMANCE--
19

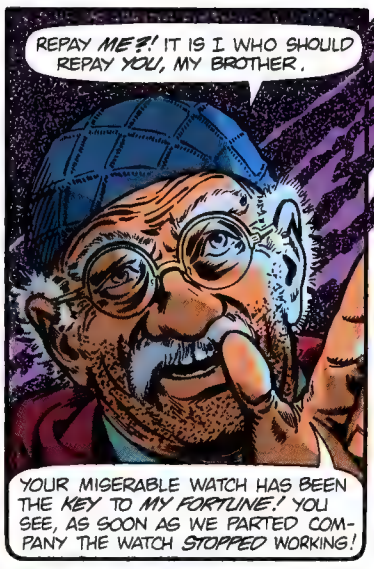
--AND LET THE MAGICKS BEGIN!
THE CATACLYSMIC CONCLUSION IN
3!


POOR FOOLS--DO YOU DARE CAST DICE WITH DESTINY?
ORIENT
THE WORDS BOOM THROUGH THE DRONING MURMER OF THE JET ENGINES AS ORIENT STARES OUT THE 747'S RAIN STREAKED WINDOW--A SWIRL OF IMAGES FLASHING ACROSS HIS MEMORY...
...KATE'S UNEARTHLY GRIMACE...
DR. ORIENT
©1983 by Frank Lauria
Brought to you by: FRANK LAURIA & MARSHALL ROGERS
lettering by: ADAM KUBERT

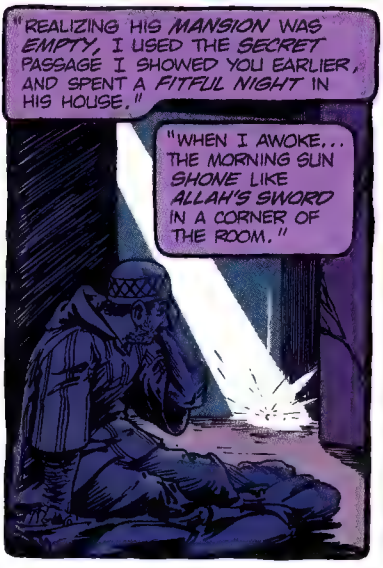
...SYBELLE'S GAPING SHOCK...
KATE! IT'S ME... AUNT SYBELLE!
SAVE YOUR BREATH. IT'S NOT HER SPEAKING. KATE'S POSSESSED...
BUT SHE'S CONSCIOUS?
NO! SHE'S SLIPPED BACK--
YOU MEAN WE FAILED... SHE'S DOOMED...?
LET'S CALL IT... A STALEMATE, FOR NOW.
BUT THE TRANCE... YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED...
THAT WAS THE PAST...
...PERHAPS, IT'S ALSO THE KEY TO THE FUTURE.
KEY... OWEN?
THE MARKETPLACE WHERE WE FOUND THE GIRL... I'VE BEEN THERE BEFORE--
--I'LL HAVE TO RETURN THERE TODAY, TO UNDERSTAND YESTERDAY...
...THIS IS YOUR CAPTAIN SPEAKING...
clik
...WE'RE STILL IN OUR HOLDING PATTERN OVER MARRAKECH... SOON AS WE GET OUR C
MORE TEA, BEFORE WE LAND, SIR?
PLEASE--
--HOT MINT TEA REMINDS ME OF THE MEDINA...
THEN YOU HAVE BEEN TO MOROCCO BEFORE?
SOME YEARS AGO, WHEN I WAS A STUDENT.
TOO BAD. I'D LOVE TO BE HIS TOUR GUIDE!

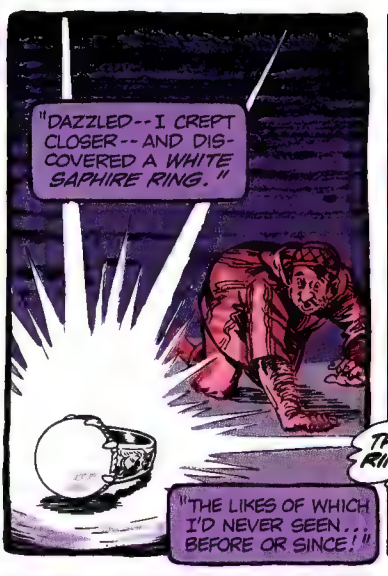

AH, YES... DR. ORIENT. WE HAVE BEEN AWAITING YOU. WELCOME TO THE HOTEL MAMMOUNIA, ...YOU REQUIRE A GUIDE PERHAPS?
NO, THANKS. BUT I WOULD LIKE TO PLACE A CALL TO NEW YORK...HERE'S THE NUMBER...
YES, SIR. THAT COULD TAKE A FEW HOURS.
I'LL BE BACK IN TIME.
THOUGH THE RAIN STILL FALLS, ORIENT IGNORES THE CARRIAGES AT THE HOTEL GATES AND BEGINS TO WALK. EVEN BEFORE HE REACHES THE MARKETPLACE, HE HEARS THE DRUMS. YEARS AGO HE'D VISITED MARRAKECH AND THE THROBBING DRUMS WERE ODDLY FAMILIAR, LIKE CHORDS IN A CHILDHOOD SONG...
DADABOOMBOOMDA
...AND HE UNDERSTANDS THAT THEY ARE THE PULSE OF THE SWARMING MARKET, AND MAKE AS DISTINCT AN IMPRESSION ON HIM NOW, AS THEY HAD MADE FOUR DECADES PAST-- ONLY HOURS AGO.
AS HE NEARS THE MARKETPLACE, ORIENT FOCUSES ON THE PRESENT, KNOWING A TIGHT GRASP ON REALITY IS IMPORTANT WHEN ENTERING A WORLD BOUNDED BY MAGICIANS, ACROBATS, DANCERS, FORTUNE TELLERS AND FORTUNE HUNTERS OF EVERY PURSUATION...WHO INHABIT THIS OASIS AT THE EDGE OF CIVILIZATION.
BUT WHAT IF HE WAS WRONG, SUPPOSE IT WAS CAIRO INSTEAD? OR JERUSALEM?
DABOOMBOOM
BOOM
SON OF A GOAT! WATCH--
SORRY FATHER, MY FAULT--
IT'S YOU!!
I BEG YOUR PARD'ON?
DON'T YOU REMEMBER? YOU CHEATED ME!
YOU CHEATED ME! AS SOON AS YOU GAVE ME THIS WORTHLESS TRINKET, IT CEASED TO TELL TIME! IT HAS NOT WORKED FOR FIFTY YEARS--A HALF CENTURY!


YOU MUST BE MISTAK--
WAIT! THIS IS SYBELLE'S WATCH-- THE ONE I GAVE TO THE MERCHANT WHEN SYBELLE AND I WERE HERE DURING OUR ASTRAL EXPERIENCE.
I'M ON THE RIGHT TRACK!
I'LL BE HAPPY TO REPAY YOU...
PLIP


REPAY ME?! IT IS I WHO SHOULD REPAY YOU, MY BROTHER.
YOUR MISERABLE WATCH HAS BEEN THE KEY TO MY FORTUNE! YOU SEE, AS SOON AS WE PARTED COMPANY THE WATCH STOPPED WORKING!

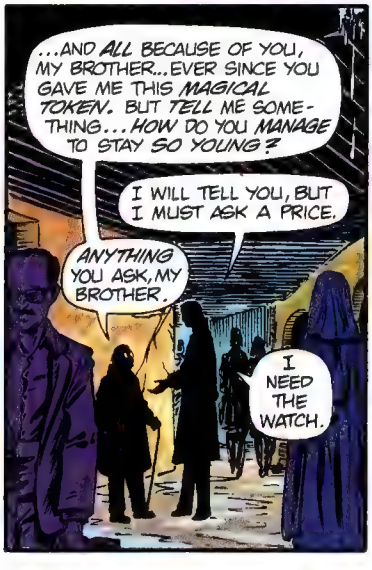
"BECAUSE I WAS UNABLE TO SELL THIS WORTHLESS TIMEPIECE, I WAS FORCED TO FIND SHELTER IN THE STREET. AS I WAS LOOKING FOR A NOOK TO REST MY HEAD, I SAW THE MAN YOU SOUGHT, LEAVING HIS VILLA."


"REALIZING HIS MANSION WAS EMPTY, I USED THE SECRET PASSAGE I SHOWED YOU EARLIER, AND SPENT A FITFUL NIGHT IN HIS HOUSE."
"WHEN I AWOKE... THE MORNING SUN SHONE LIKE ALLAH'S SWORD IN A CORNER OF THE ROOM."

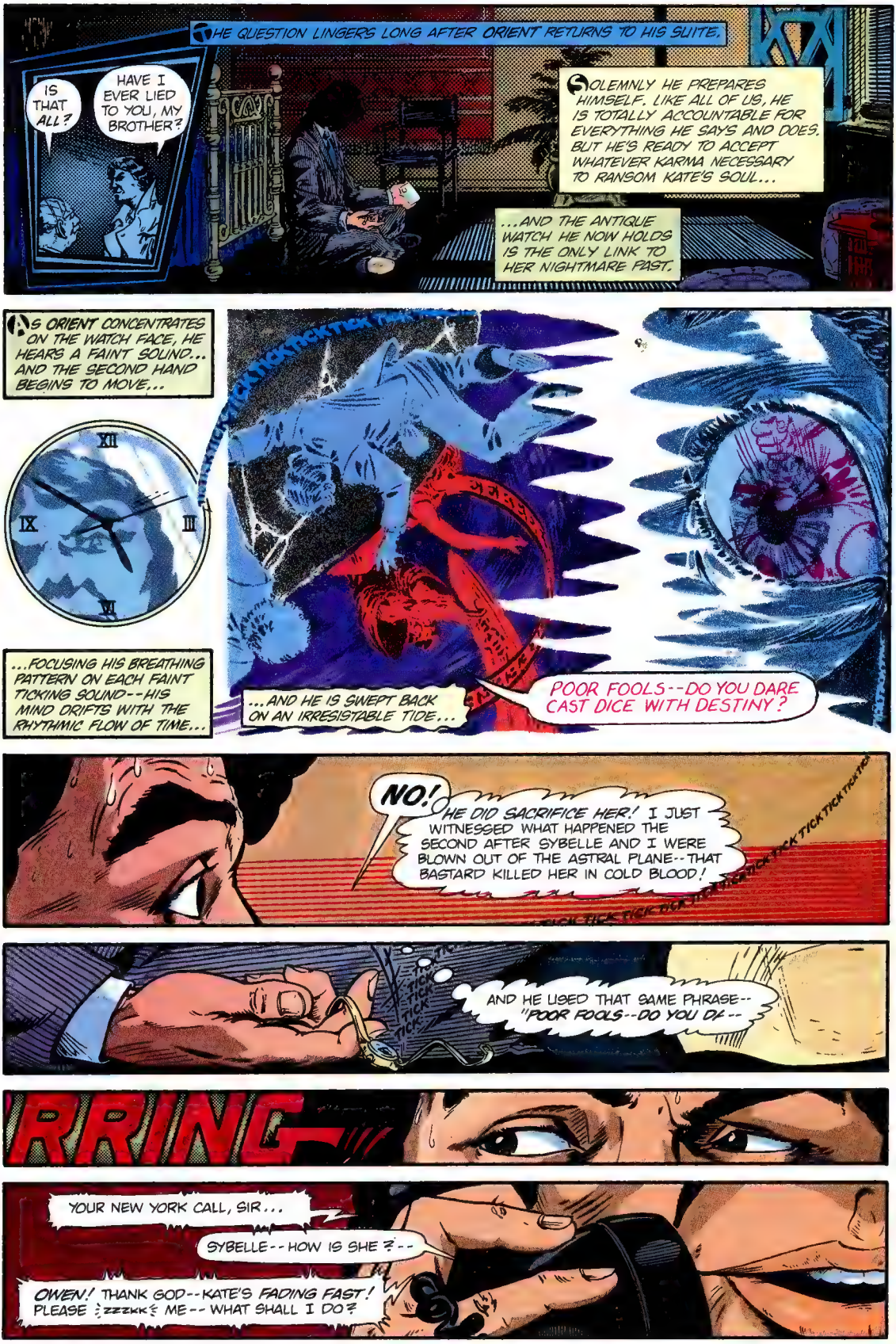

"DAZZLED--I CREPT CLOSER-- AND DISCOVERED A WHITE SAPHIRE RING."
"THE LIKES OF WHICH I'D NEVER SEEN... BEFORE OR SINCE!"

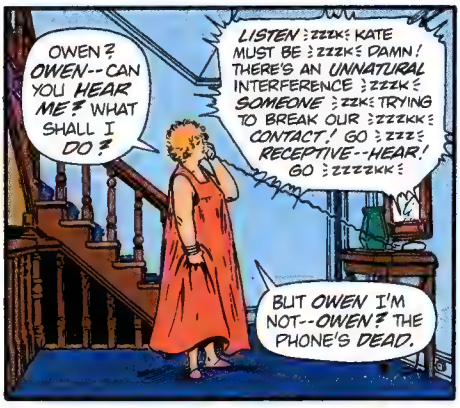
THE RING!
THAT RING?! YOU HAVE THAT RING?! WHERE IS IT?

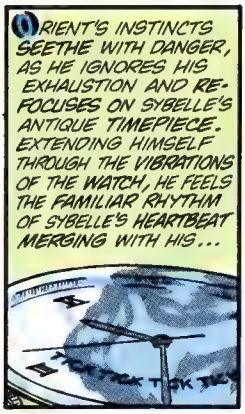
HAH--NO--THAT IS THE POINT OF THE WHOLE STORY...THAT AFTERNOON, I SOLD IT TO A STRANGER ON THE STREET FOR SEVENTY THOUSAND DIRHAM! CASH!!
OVERNIGHT I BECAME A RICH MAN, AND I HAVE PROSPERED EVER SINCE!


...AND ALL BECAUSE OF YOU, MY BROTHER...EVER SINCE YOU GAVE ME THIS MAGICAL TOKEN. BUT TELL ME SOMETHING... HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO STAY SO YOUNG?
I WILL TELL YOU, BUT I MUST ASK A PRICE.
ANYTHING YOU ASK, MY BROTHER.
I NEED THE WATCH.

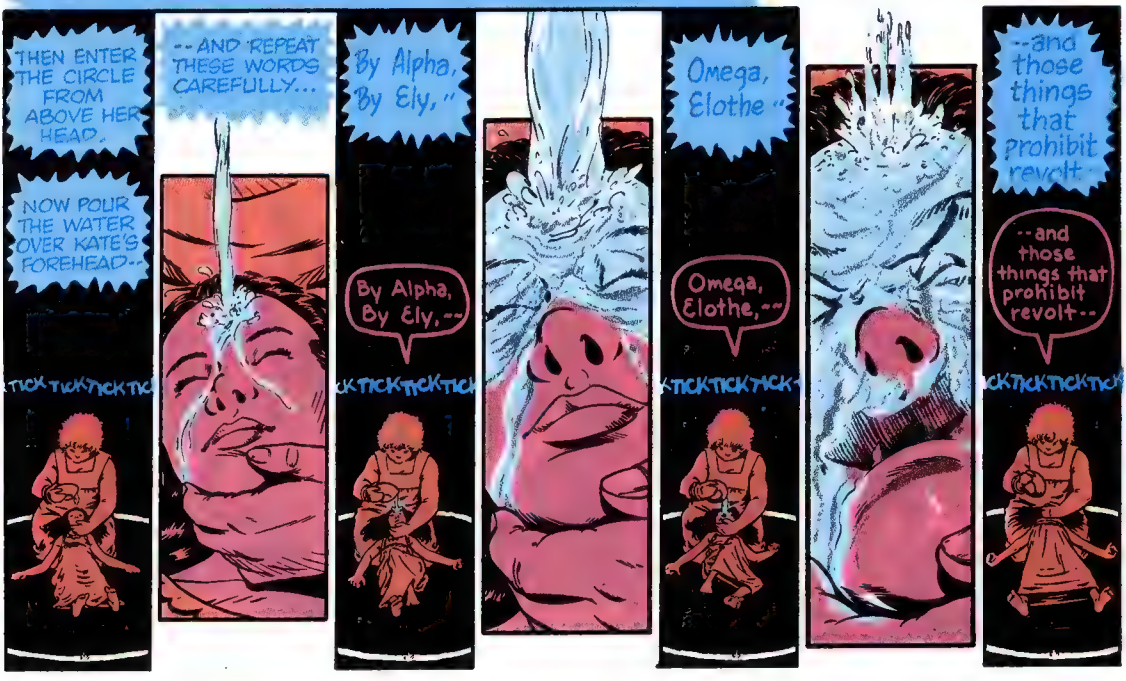
ANYONE ELSE I WOULD REFUSE. BUT FOR YOU, I GLADLY GIVE UP MY TALISMAN.
NOW TELL ME THE SECRET.
NEVER EAT ANIMAL FLESH, TRUST ALLAH ABOVE ALL ELSE--AND WALK FIVE KILOMETERS EACH MORNING OF YOUR LIFE.


THE QUESTION LINGERS LONG AFTER ORIENT RETURNS TO HIS SUITE.
IS THAT ALL?
HAVE I EVER LIED TO YOU, MY BROTHER?
SOLEMNLY HE PREPARES HIMSELF. LIKE ALL OF US, HE IS TOTALLY ACCOUNTABLE FOR EVERYTHING HE SAYS AND DOES. BUT HE'S READY TO ACCEPT WHATEVER KARMA NECESSARY TO RANSOM KATE'S SOUL...
...AND THE ANTIQUE WATCH HE NOW HOLDS IS THE ONLY LINK TO HER NIGHTMARE PAST.
AS ORIENT CONCENTRATES ON THE WATCH FACE, HE HEARS A FAINT SOUND... AND THE SECOND HAND BEGINS TO MOVE...
...FOCUSING HIS BREATHING PATTERN ON EACH FAINT TICKING SOUND--HIS MIND DRIFTS WITH THE RHYTHMIC FLOW OF TIME...
...AND HE IS SWEPT BACK ON AN IRRESISTABLE TIDE...
POOR FOOLS--DO YOU DARE CAST DICE WITH DESTINY?
NO!
HE DID SACRIFICE HER! I JUST WITNESSED WHAT HAPPENED THE SECOND AFTER SYBELLE AND I WERE BLOWN OUT OF THE ASTRAL PLANE--THAT BASTARD KILLED HER IN COLD BLOOD!
AND HE USED THAT SAME PHRASE--"POOR FOOLS--DO YOU DA--
RRING
YOUR NEW YORK CALL, SIR...
SYBELLE--HOW IS SHE?--
OWEN! THANK GOD--KATE'S FADING FAST! PLEASE ZZZKK ME--WHAT SHALL I DO?


OWEN? OWEN--CAN YOU HEAR ME? WHAT SHALL I DO?
LISTEN ZZZK KATE MUST BE ZZZK DAMN! THERE'S AN UNNATURAL INTERFERENCE ZZZK SOMEONE ZZK TRYING TO BREAK OUR ZZZKK CONTACT! GO ZZZ RECEPTIVE--HEAR! GO ZZZZKK
BUT OWEN I'M NOT--OWEN? THE PHONE'S DEAD.


ORIENT'S INSTINCTS SEETHE WITH DANGER, AS HE IGNORES HIS EXHAUSTION AND RE-FOCUSES ON SYBELLE'S ANTIQUE TIMEPIECE. EXTENDING HIMSELF THROUGH THE VIBRATIONS OF THE WATCH, HE FEELS THE FAMILIAR RHYTHM OF SYBELLE'S HEARTBEAT MERGING WITH HIS...
TICK TICK TICK TICK

FIRST DRAW A PERFECT CIRCLE WITH CHALK AND STRING.
THEN LAY KATE'S BODY IN THE CENTER OF THE CIRCLE. MAKE SURE HER HEAD IS POINTING DUE NORTH.
STARTING ABOVE HER HEAD MOVING CLOCKWISE--
--COVER THE PERIMETER OF THE CIRCLE WITH SALT--
--AND FINALLY, PLACE THREE GRAINS OF RICE AT EACH OF THE FOUR COMPASS POINTS AROUND THE CIRCLE.
NEXT PREPARE A BOWL OF WATER FORTIFIED WITH OIL AND SALT.


THEN ENTER THE CIRCLE FROM ABOVE HER HEAD.
NOW POUR THE WATER OVER KATE'S FOREHEAD--
--AND REPEAT THESE WORDS CAREFULLY...
By Alpha, By Ely,"
By Alpha, By Ely,--
Omega, Elothe,"
Omega, Elothe,--
--and those things that prohibit revolt
--and those things that prohibit revolt--

SUDDENLY
--A CYCLONIC BOLT OF HOSTILE ENERGY--
--SEVERING ALL CONTACT--
UNABLE TO CONTAIN HIS SHATTERED EMOTIONS--ORIENT LEAVES THE STIFLING ROOM FOR THE COOL, SHELTERING DARKNESS OUTSIDE.
HE WANDERS AIMLESSLY--UNTIL A FAMILIAR VOICE ROUSES HIS NUMBED SENSES.
LITTLE BROTHER, IS SOMETHING WRONG? YOU LOOK ILL.
NO...EVERYTHING IS AS IT SHOULD BE.
DIMLY HE REALIZES HE HAS RETURNED TO THE MARKETPLACE ONCE MORE.
HERE--YOU MAY AS WELL TAKE THIS. I WON'T NEED IT ANYMORE.
BUT IT WAS A GIFT.
IF YOU WISH TO MAKE ME A GIFT--SEARCH YOUR MEMORY--TELL ME THE NAME OF THE MAN WHO OWNED THAT HOUSE--WHERE YOU FOUND THE RING.
EVERYONE KNOWS THAT.
VERY IMPORTANT HE WAS! A BARON...VON SPEER.
THANK YOU, BROTHER. AT LEAST I WON'T GO HOME EMPTY-HANDED.
huh?
BUT IT WON'T SAVE THAT HELPLESS GIRL.
YOU HAVE BLESSED ME WITH ANOTHER MIRACLE! FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FIFTY YEARS--THE WATCH WORKS!

TWENTY HOURS LATER, ORIENT'S ROLLS GHOST SLIDES TO A STOP IN FRONT OF KATE'S HOME...
WHY DIDN'T YOU CALL? I'VE BEEN WORRIED SICK.
HOW IS SHE?
OWEN--I'M CONCERNED!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? IS SHE OKAY OR NOT?
...WELL--YOU'LL HAVE TO SEE FOR YOURSELF--
EVERYTHING WAS GOING FINE WITH THE RITUAL--WHEN WHAMO--IT FELT LIKE--LIKE THE AIR WAS FLOODED WITH ELECTRICITY!
IT WAS AWFUL! --OWEN, WHAT WAS THAT? --IT BLACKED ME OUT!
WHEN I CAME TO, KATE WAS UNCONSCIOUS, BREATHING EASY--BUT--
--I FOUND THAT BRAND--
--BURNED ON HER FOREHEAD!
LONG MOMENTS LATER...SYBELLE BREAKS THE SILENCE.
uh...WAS YOUR TRIP SUCCESSFUL?
WHAT?
DID YOU FIND ANYTHING IN MARRAKESH?
JUST A NAME... ...VON SPEER.
OH MY GOD, OWEN--VON SPEER!...THAT'S THE NAME OF KATE'S GRANDFATHER!
STILL TO COME: THE ULTIMATE GAME

Notes from Surf City

by Jan & Dean Mullaney

Dm

Hot Fun in the Summertime!

Now that the summer's almost over and the major convention season is behind us, we can all sit back, relax and without a moment's hesitation, dive head first into the pile of work that's accumulated in our absence!

But before we do any of that, it's only right that we say thanks to the fine folks in Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Houston and San Diego for coming up to say hello and being so kind to us. You'd think that one convention would seem like any other .. . . until you get there and discover an entirely *new* group of fantastic fans and convention organizers.

So to all you people . . . thanks, from the bottom of our hearts.

See You in September . . . but Where?

By now it's official. Our editorial offices have moved to the sunny state of California. Northern California to be exact, just a short jaunt north of San Francisco. So from now on, send your letters of comment, fanzines, submissions (with stamped self-addressed envelopes, naturally) and general kibitzing to our new location:

ECLIPSE COMICS
P. O. Box 199
Guerneville, California 95446

(And an aside to **DNAgents** inker Al Gordon: no, we didn't move this close to you just to keep an eye on the progress of the book!)

At any rate, folks, our subscription address remains in New York. But if you're looking to reach anyone in the editorial staff, you've got to ride the wild surf to California. Permanently relocated in California are Dean, cat, Jimmy Shannon, E. Lessly, Alice B. Stockham, Gail Duvall and Barbie Sue the Guinea Pig.

The Return of Mike Friedrich, or Star*Reach Strikes Back!

Back around ten years ago Mike Friedrich (one of our new neighbors!) essentially began what has since become the burgeoning independent comics scene. In fact, if it weren't for Mike and **Star*Reach**, there's a good chance you wouldn't be seeing such companies as Eclipse, Pacific, First, Capital, et al.

Among the fantastic creative talents whose work appeared in Mike's comics were Jim Starlin, Steve Leialoha, Dick Giordano, P. Craig Russell, Howard Chaykin, Dave Sim, Gene Day, Paul Levitz, Steve Ditko, Frank Brunner, Frank Cirocco, Len Wein and Steve Englehart! If you're wondering why we're telling you all this, the answer is simple: in the coming months we'll be treating you to all of the above-named creators in six monthly, Baxter paper issues of **Star*Reach Classics**! We've even got the head honcho himself, Mike Friedrich, to edit the series. Mike sat down and picked his favorite stories from **Star*Reach**, **Imagine** and **Quack**. Most of these stories have never been printed before in color, and the original print runs were so small that we know lots of you will see for the first time these stories by the writers and artists who are leading the medium to new heights today. All this plus new covers by Brunner, Russell, Giordano, Cirocco, and Chaykin! This is one series you won't want to miss!

Frank Brunner's sensational new cover.

Halfway Around the World and Into the Future!

Okay already! We've been beseiged by requests . . . nay, demands for the release date of **Aztec Ace** no. 1. We'll tell. We'll tell! But before we do, we've got another **Ace** announcement. We've found an inker who can do full justice to the awesome pencils of Michael Hernandez. But not just any inker. The guy we found is *more* than an inker. He's also a great artist in his own right. The name is a familiar one to fans of great detailed art. The name is Nestor Redondo, who's currently doing such a bang-up job with Mary Wilshire on *Red Sonja*. We're thrilled to have Nestor on the book, and we went halfway around the world to his native Phillipines to get him. So that means that we have a writer in Pennsylvania, a penciller in New York, a letterer in New Jersey, an inker in the Phillipines, a colorist in Missouri and an editor in California! Who says producing quality comics is easy!

But what about the premiere issue, you ask? Well, since Nestor is presently tied up doing art for his government, we're waiting for him to fulfill that commitment, which will be soon enough. Look for the giant-size first issue on sale in December. Aztec Ace – he's making the past safe from the future!

That's it for this month. Until next time, surf's up!

The Scorpio Letters

Hi—Steve Englehart here. Last issue I alluded briefly to the fact that "bi-monthly" is a rather loose term when used by Eclipse—and I defended it then, as I defend it now, by pointing out that, whatever the wait, you always get what you pay for. Now, it seems, we've found another benefit in this system: we can run your letters on #1 in #2. This is an especially important benefit since there are only going to be three issues altogether at this time, and under more conventional circumstances we'd have very little chance to talk.

Why three issues? Because that's how it worked out when Marshall and I took my two *Madame Xanadu* scripts and expanded them to fit our new characters. But the sales and response to #1 have been so good so far that there's no shortage of talk about doing more with darling Rosa. Time—somewhere between a bi-month and twenty lifetimes—will tell.

Dear Marshall and Steve,

This is the worst psychic assault yet. Its 3:06 A.M. and I was attempting to read a comic book named **Scropio Rose** #1. Nearly half way done, I noticed that feeling: dizzyness, ringing in the ears, rapid heartbeat and a frightening feeling of dread. What is it I think or do to deserve this? I like reading and speculating about the occult, yes, but this is too much. This must be what an "acid trip flashback" feels like. It is not pleasant. I'm scared to go to sleep, what with the strange semi-astral experiences I've had of late. Knowledge, yes, but harassment, no. . .and by whom, or. . .what?

Before you dismiss this letter as the rantings of a crackpot or the gimmick of a zealous comics fan, let me briefly allude to an unfortunate run-in I had with Tarot cards four years ago. I was living alone, in a blighted section of town, with nothing for company save my own depression and some Aleister Crowley books. Among them were the Book of Thoth and the Crowleyan Tarot deck. Foolishly disregarding the general admonishments against doing your own readings, I learned to read the cards using myself as Querent. For those concerned, this is a dangerous error, especially with this deck.

Days passed, and I became (wrongly!) convinced that my only value was intended as a martyr, corresponding in the after-life as a cipher for Crowley's "Scarlet Woman," otherwise known as Babylon.

There is more to it than that, but all that remains to be said is that the ensuing occult-oriented suicide attempt proved that the occult was something I sould steer clear of. Why then, did I buy **Scorpio Rose** and retain my spiritual inquistiveness? That's a whole new bucket of beans. Suffice to say, Marshall Rogers is one of my two favorite comic artists (the other being P. Craig Russell). His **Doctor Strange** was lyrical and mystical enough, but S.R. exuded ectoplasmic force from page one. Maybe Steve Englehart succeeded too well, and the folks at DC and Marvel had the right idea when they attempted to alter the story. Its frightening realism comes too close to home. My only complaint is that even though Tom Palmer is a fine gothic inker, his sketchy style tended to obliterate Roger's linework, often leaving only the compositional structure.

Rave up time: Eclipse Comics, like Eclipse Magazine, is undoubtedly tops in its field. Keep up the unparalleled work, guys! Best of the tenth card of the Major Arcana (fortune and luck)!

Steve Feldman
60 Forest Street
Providence, R.I. 02906

I'll tell you, Steven, we're hard put to tell if your letter is serious or a put-on. If it's a put-on, it's a particularly dour one—but if it's serious, you sure segue from suicide to the Marshall Rogers fan club pretty easily. And, of course, the master of horror, H.P. Lovecraft, used to use your style to rave about the blighted parts of Providence himself. However, better to err on the side of caution...

To seek after absolute truth is to launch yourself into infinity; therefore, the principal necessities of a Magus are strong will and strong sense of self. Unfortunately, many people who feel the call of the unknown are only seeking escape, and thus are the least well equipped to answer that call. The question then arises: how do you know which kind of person you are? The answer: you have to ask yourself, and answer honestly. Nobody else—no person, no angel, no demon and no deck of cards—can answer that question for you.

Aleister Crowley had a strong sense of self, and his magickal motto was "Perdurabo"—"I shall endure to the end." He recognized no limits in his search for knowledge—consequently, in my opinion, he became simultaneously the most knowledgeable Magus in recent memory, and an incredibly dangerous person to have around. His insights have only rarely been surpassed, and much can be learned from his writings, but the histories of people with lesser wills who simply *followed* him—who said "He can *tell* me what I need to know"—are filled with horror stories.

Finally, as far as our *Scorpio Rose* stories go. . .Marshall, Tom and I put a lot of energy into our stories, and, for my part at least, when I'm doing magickal stories it's bound to be magickal energy. But the will behind them is to entertain and perhaps inform—not drive anyone crazy. The next time you think you're getting some other message from them, remember—it's only a story.

Dear Dean, Frank, Marshall, Steve, and Tom,

I was deeply impressed with my introduction to the mystical character of Scorpio Rose. Marshall Rogers never fails to amaze me with the uniqueness of his layouts. Steve Englehart did a beautiful job with the script. It had me anxiously awaiting each new page. All in all, it should go down as a classic among both comic art and writing.

But what I am really impressed with is the magnificent job that occupied your back-up feature, **Dr. Orient.** Truly this character is one of the most inspired to grace a comic in many ages. He is no pale imitation of Marvel's Dr. Strange, he has an originality all his own. He's no sorcerer supreme, he is merely an ordinary human as you and I. I am not all that pleased with the characterization of Sybelle. She behaves as a too commonly-placed irrational women. But I applaud her physical appearance. She appears as a normal person, not perfectly shaped and behaved as appears in other comics. This is another original idea that gathers in this short 8-page story. Nice job of allowing the story to flow smoothly instead of it being cluttered because of its short length. If the reader reaction to this story is favorable, perhaps, you would consider a limited-series in which to better introduce the characters. Since Marshall Rogers' time will be mainly spent on capturing the spirit of Scorpio Rose, may I suggest that you allow Steve Leialoha to take-over the pencils! All I can say is thank you for a enjoyable issue!

Jim Pruett
412 Tracy Terrace
Warner Robins, Ga. 31093

And thank you, Jim. But Marshall won't give up his pencil on either *Scorpio Rose* or *Dr. Orient,* since he's good friends with both myself and Frank Lauria, Dr. Orient's author both here and in his own series of Ballantine novels.

Dear Dean,

Scorpio Rose #1 is another winner from the team of Steve Englehart and Marshall Rogers. Considering Steve's great interest in the occult, **Scorpio Rose** should be a notch or two above the other "mystic comics."

I have always thought that Steve Englehart is the best writer in comics. I have not enjoyed the characters he handled at Marvel and DC nearly as much since he left them. It's a treat for me (and I'm sure others) to have new stories and characters from him. To know he's getting proper compensation for his work makes it worth the extra cost.

This origin story was a good set up. I'm happy that while the plot is continued, the main story resolved itself in the one story.

Since many of us are not more than passingly familiar with the occult and particularly tarot cards, would it be possible for Steve, or someone, to include a text feature explaining the tarot cards as they relate to the stories? For example, the Aeon card played a pivotal part in the story, but I have no idea what it means and its significance.

While I enjoyed the **Scorpio Rose** story, I'm afraid I cannot say the same for **Dr. Orient.** Superficially, it reminded me of Dr. Indiana Strange. The story didn't really make a lot of sense to me. Marshall Rogers' art is not as good as it was in the first story. I hope the next episode is better.

Before I close, it was mentioned twice on the text page that **Scorpio Rose** is a mini-series. How long will it run? Will it tell only the current plot? What future plans are there for the character?

Neal Alhadeff
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Milton, WV 25541

A Tarot text feature? It's possible, Neal, especially if we do more *Scorpio Rose*. What do the rest of you think?

Dear Dean,

Please make **Scorpio Rose** a regular series instead of just a mini-series. Quite simply, **Scorpio Rose** #1 was fantastic. I am a fan of Madame Xanadu and I'm glad that it wasn't her in the story. The Madame, to me, seems aloof and beyond humanity. On the other hand, Scorpio Rose seems more sexually overt (her moves on Igor Gravesend) and when she fights, she fights with a passion. How did she get the name Scorpio Rose? What are the secrets of the Book of Fleshe? Who (or what) is Fleshe?

From the picture on the cover, Dr. Orient looked old. I enjoyed his story, though. How old is Dr. Orient? What exactly are his powers? For some reason I usually don't get "involved" with male heroes, but I really do like Owen Orient and if you can give him his own series, I'll certainly get it. I hope both **Scorpio Rose** and **Dr. Orient** are successes.

Ricky Burns
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"Fleshe" is an Olde English way of spelling "Flesh," Ricky, and "The Book of Fleshe," as briefly noted these past two issues, is a tome containing spells which can create a living child through magick. We'll see lots more along these lines in next issue's climax.

As for Scorpio Rose, it may just be that Rosa chose the name because Scorpio is a sign traditionally associated with magick.

Or it may not.

Dear Jan or Dean,

Some comments from a frustrated comics reader. I just read **Scorpio Rose** #1. I think the art is very fine and this is the first time I've really liked the color on a high-quality-paper book. But the story? Oh, dear, the story is so predictable. Origin stories are never the best starting place it seems. You'd have done better by Rosa to let us watch her in action for a while, let us get to know her a bit before telling us how and why she became what she is. She has a distressingly familiar set of personality traits: doesn't like being immortal, is cut off from human emotions, evinces a noble resignation to her fate, lacks a sense of humor. Magic is the natural medium for a really good heroine, so why is she no better than this? And why is it every woman with extra-ordinary powers has a rape somewhere in her past as motivation? Male heroes find lots of reasons to excel. Why is it always rape for women? I get so tired of it. I hope she improves; the art is so good that it would be a waste if she didn't. Let her develop some quirks and spare us the "power binge" story, at least for awhile.

On a more up beat note, I like Dr. Orient. Since the secondary feature is so short, it's hard to judge the story yet, but the character is such a nice change. He stays cool under pressure, without coming on like a macho jerk; keeps his mind on what he's supposed to be doing (so many heroes dither!); is resourceful and bright and, wonderful to behold, he doesn't dress in tights. I could do without some of the occult; it isn't necessary and the art needs to be sharpened. It looks huried in places. Even if Rosa stays uninteresting, I'll at least keep up with Owen Orient.

All complaints aside, I'm glad that "screw the freelancer" is a game that is dying out. I wish you well.

Karen C. Gunn
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Well, Karen, I certainly respect your right to your opinion, but I guess we were just looking at two different stories. We did see Rosa in action before we told her origin, and in reference to rape, cat yronwode and I can only think of one other woman whose origin was involved with that crime; Red Sonja, who did indeed get extraordinary powers out of the deal. But Rosa didn't get any powers out of her rape; it only inspired her to go find them herself. As for lacking emotions and humor, no, she wasn't nobly resigning herself to that fate. She was simply *unable* to feel any emotion about it, until she met Igor again and everything broke loose. Certainly, after that time she began to recover her emotions, and in this issue she is almost overwhelmed by them. I guess what I'm saying is that I'm not trying to do a "magickal heroine," I'm trying to do a *person*.

But we are glad that you and so many others agreed with us about Owen Orient. Frank Lauria is new to comics, and telling a story in eight pages is not the easiest way to begin, but combining his verbal skill with Marshall's visual skill made the transition a certified snap.

And now I'd like to announce a contest. In the waning pages of this issue's *Scorpio Rose* story, Igor Gravesend met the lovely Lorelei—and though you don't really need to know this to appreciate the story, she was telling the truth when she said she'd appeared before, in other places and under other names. For the best letter providing a *complete* listing of those places and names, I will provide the original *Madame Xanadu* script on which *Scorpio Rose* #1 was based. This is a great chance for you budding comic creators to study the evolution of a concept, complete with Marshall's and my marginal notes and sketches.

Send all your entries, as well as your comments on this issue, to:

The Scorpio Letters
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